Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative (ESIC) planning process:
Interim Report

Global SDG Synthesis Coalition (GSDGSC)

Building a Global Evidence Synthesis Community (BGESC)

Pan-African Collective for Evidence (PACE)

Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES)

Working group 5: **Capacity Sharing**	Stage 4b report: **Solutions and costing**	Last updated: **5 June 2025**	Consultation window: **6–11 June 2025**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents the following 10 solutions, with their associated cost estimates, for inclusion in the menu of options for funder investment:

1. **ESIC Knowledge Hub**: A platform to achieve system interoperability and improve discoverability of evidence synthesis and knowledge translation (KT) resources (**$9,249,752)**.
2. **KTai**: An AI-driven application to automate the knowledge translation process **($3,006,705).**
3. **Regional Collaborating Centers**: Regional hubs to strengthen capacity for evidence synthesis and knowledge translation **($12,596,420).**
4. **Mentorship and Train-the-Trainer Programs**: Structured programs to enhance skills among synthesis producers and evidence intermediaries, linked to regional hubs **($2,764,718).**
5. **Continuous Professional Development Modules**: Ongoing education to maintain competencies in evidence synthesis and KT **($1,189,360).**
6. **Competency Frameworks**: Standards for skills and behaviours related to evidence synthesis and knowledge translation **($1,316,938).**
7. **Curriculum for UN National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD)** and other national government training agencies **($41,359)**.
8. **Global Evidence Synthesis Innovation Fund (GESIF)**: Funding for innovation in evidence synthesis and KT initiatives **($8,267,722**).
9. **Funders Forum**: A mechanism for aligning investments in evidence synthesis **($693,395).**
10. **Capacity Sharing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) System**: A system to assess the impact of capacity-sharing initiatives across ESIC **($1,074,276).**

The total solutions bundle is estimated to cost approximately $40.2 million.

The solutions align with the SHOW-ME the evidence, which are foundational principles upon which the ESIC planning process is built. In this report we also assess how each solution can enhance maturity in capacity sharing processes for evidence synthesis, addressing current gaps and limitations.

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INTRODUCTION

In report 4a we presented the results of a two-phased prioritization process in which the solutions developed in stage 3 were examined in relation to their expected magnitude and meaningfulness of benefit, and judgement about the effort (time, funding, and manpower resources) that will be required to implement them. This prioritization exercise resulted in recommendation of 10 high-impact solutions for inclusion in the ESIC investment menu. These solutions stemmed logically from the work undertaken by the Working Group (WG) 5 during stage 1 through stage 3 (Box 1).

In this 4b report, we present the associated cost estimates for each solution, discuss how they advance maturity, in the context of the capability maturity assessment (CMA) done in stage 2, and discuss their alignment with the 'SHOW ME the evidence principles upon which the ESIC is hinged.

> **Box 1: Planning process**
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> WG5: Capacity sharing: Building a global community with the capabilities to deliver and use evidence synthesis across all major societal questions.

> Stage 1: Where are we? What have we got and what are we missing? Identify problems, existing capabilities and gaps.
>
> Stage2: Where do we want to go? What do we need? Create vision for capacity sharing; conduct CMA to identify areas for strengthening.
>
> Stage 3: How do we get there? Identify a long list of solutions to strengthen capabilities and close identified gaps
>
> Stage 4a: What will make the biggest impact: Conduct impact-effort assessment to prioritize solutions. Result: 10 high-impact solutions for investment.
>
> Stage 4b: Bringing it all together: What is the estimated cost of the solution bundle? How do the solutions reflect capability maturity? How do the solutions promote the SHOW-ME principles?

HIGH-IMPACT SOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSION IN THE ESIC

The following 10 solutions are recommended for inclusion in the menu of options for funder investment:

1. ESIC Knowledge Hub
2. Knowledge Translation AI (KTai)
3. Regional collaborating centers with country nodes
4. Mentorship and Train the Trainer Programs
5. Continuous Professional Development Modules
6. Competency Frameworks for evidence synthesis production and knowledge translation
7. Curriculum for UN national evaluation capacity development (NECD)
8. Global Evidence Synthesis Innovation Fund (GESIF)
9. Funders Forum
10. Capacity sharing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system

The total cost estimate for this proposed solution bundle is **US $40,200,646**, distributed as follows:

Table 1: Total cost estimate of prioritized solutions recommended for inclusion in the menu of options for funder investment

Solution	Total costs (US$)	Percentage
ESIC Knowledge Hub	$9,249,752	23%
Knowledge Translation AI (KTai)	$3,006,705	7%
Regional collaborating centers with country nodes	$12,596,420	31%
Mentorship and Train the Trainer Programs	$2,764,718	7%
Continuous Professional Development Modules	$1,189,360	3%
Competency Frameworks for evidence synthesis production and knowledge translation	$1,316,938	3%
Curriculum for UN national evaluation capacity development/ National Schools of Government /Training Institutions for Public Administration	$41,359	0% (<1%)
Global Evidence Synthesis Innovation Fund (GESIF)	$8,267,722	21%
Funders Forum	$693,395	2%
Capacity sharing monitoring, evaluation and learning	$1,074,276	3%
Total	**$40,200,646**	**100%**

The above estimates reflect the cost of inputs that will be required for development and operationalization of each solution over a 5-year period.

COST BREAKDOWN

In this section we present a breakdown of the costs for each solution by the main cost drivers. These are:

- People: Human resources involved in delivering the solution.
- Contracts: Third-party contracts, not including IT maintenance, needed to deliver the solution.
- Tools such as software license, data sharing tools, or new computer hardware.
- Training: Attendance at training events.
- Citizens' engagement: Hours of citizen engagement envisaged during the length of the solution.
- Travel: Local and international travel and accommodation costs for the administration or promotion of the solution.
- Dissemination: Publication and promotional expenses.

All total costs include a standard 20% of total direct costs for overheads. All figures are quoted in USD.

Solution 1: ESIC Knowledge Hub

Description: A resource-curating website to function as a centralized access point to high-quality, relevant content about evidence synthesis production and use, especially from the Global South. The Hub will be set up to improve discoverability and interoperability across systems, multiple evidence sources.

Cost breakdown: Table 2

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$6,532,477	84.75%
Contracts	$67,000	0.87%
Tools	$155,750	2.02%
Training event attendance	$172,000	2.23%
Citizen engagement	$11,400	0.15%
Travel	$69,500	0.90%
Dissemination	$645,000	8.37%
Other	$55,000	0.71%
Total direct costs	$7,708,127	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$9,249,752**	

Solution 2: Knowledge Translation AI (KTai)

Description: This application will use artificial intelligence to automate the process of translating findings from an evidence synthesis into useable tools for practice, policy, or decision-making. It will also provide the ability for citizens to view, vote, or comment on a policy-relevant summary, thereby stimulating civic engagement to make synthesized evidence actionable.

Cost breakdown: Table 3

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$2,070,687	82.64%
Contracts	$0	0.00%
Tools	$161,400	6.44%
Training event attendance	$172,000	6.86%
Citizen engagement	$11,400	0.45%
Travel	$50,000	2.00%
Dissemination	$40,100	1.60%
Other	$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	$2,505,587	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$3,006,705**	

Solution 3: Regional collaborating centers with country nodes

Description: Regional collaborating centres to be established with country-level nodes to localize capacity and skill in adapting global knowledge. Assumption: 1 coordinating centre (rotating secretariat) with 6 regional collaborating centres with 10 nodes covering several countries each.

Cost breakdown: Table 4

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$7,530,217	71.74%
Contracts	$100,000	0.95%
Tools	$67,800	0.65%
Training event attendance	$2,160,000	20.58%
Citizen engagement	$114,000	1.09%
Travel	$510,000	4.86%
Dissemination	$15,000	0.14%
Other	$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	$10,497,017	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$12,596,420**	

Solution 4: Mentorship and Train the Trainer Programs

Description: Structured and interdisciplinary mentorship and train the trainer programs. Globally pooled, certified trainers and mentors (experts in evidence synthesis and translation); regional program director; senior mentors; staff for day-to-day operations; interdisciplinary trainers and mentors; website developers; content developers; research assistants; administrative staff.

Cost breakdown: Table 5

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$2,088,082	90.63%
Contracts	$30,000	1.30%
Tools	$61,000	2.65%
Training event attendance	$28,300	1.23%
Citizen engagement	$5,100	0.22%
Travel	$26,250	1.14%
Dissemination	$10,200	0.44%
Other	$55,000	2.39%
Total direct costs	$2,303,932	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$2,764,718**	

Solution 5: Continuous Professional Development Modules

Description: Continuing professional development modules for maintaining core competencies.

Cost breakdown: Table 6

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$859,633	86.73%
Contracts	$0	0.00%

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
Tools	$12,000	1.21%
Training event attendance	$108,000	10.90%
Citizen engagement	$0	0.00%
Travel	$0	0.00%
Dissemination	$11,500	1.16%
Other	$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	$991,133	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$1,189,360**	

Solution 6: Competency Frameworks for evidence synthesis production and knowledge translation

Description: Competency Frameworks developed for evidence synthesis production, knowledge translation, and formal training programs, particularly at the Master's and PhD levels. Methodological work will involve: Convene a group, do a scoping review, Delphi testing.

Cost breakdown: Table 7

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$997,348	90.88%
Contracts	$0	0.00%
Tools	$43,000	3.92%
Training event attendance	$20,400	1.86%
Citizen engagement	$2,100	0.19%
Travel	$14,600	1.33%
Dissemination	$5,000	0.46%
Other	$15,000	1.37%
Total direct costs	$1,097,448	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$1,316,938**	

Solution 7: Curriculum for UN national evaluation capacity development (NECD), National Schools of Government, or Training Institutions for Public Administration

Description: Curriculum development to incorporate formal evidence synthesis training within the NECD and other training modules.

Cost breakdown: Table 8

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$22,466	65.18%
Contracts	$0	0.00%
Tools	$12,000	34.82%

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
Training event attendance	$0	0.00%
Citizen engagement	$0	0.00%
Travel	$0	0.00%
Dissemination	$0	0.00%
Other	$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	$34,466	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$41,359**	

Solution 8: Global Evidence Synthesis Innovation Fund (GESIF)

Description: A global fund to pool resources for development and testing of innovative evidence synthesis and knowledge translation methods.

Cost breakdown: Table 9

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$6,245,268	90.65%
Contracts	$100,000	1.45%
Tools	$260,100	3.78%
Training event attendance	$34,000	0.49%
Citizen engagement	$11,400	0.17%
Travel	$169,000	2.45%
Dissemination	$70,000	1.02%
Other	$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	$6,889,768	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$8,267,722**	

Solution 9: Funders Forum

Description: A collaboration of funders with the objective to ensure that evidence synthesis funding (from the Global Innovation Fund and other sources) is allocated in a manner that maximizes the ESIC goals and societal impact.

Cost breakdown: Table 10

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$539,879	93.43%
Contracts	$0	0.00%
Tools	$12,000	2.08%
Training event attendance	$0	0.00%
Citizen engagement	$0	0.00%

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
Travel	$20,950	3.63%
Dissemination	$5,000	0.87%
Other	$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	$577,829	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$693,395**	

Solution 10: Capacity sharing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system

Description: Monitoring, evaluation, and learning system to assess the impact of capacity-sharing initiatives across different levels of the ESIC collaboration. Costs include in-house costs to manage the bids that providers could bid for. Costs exclude the expenses of the bids to actually undertake the evaluations.

Cost breakdown: Table 11

Category	Direct Costs by category	Percentage of total direct costs
People	$729,930	81.54%
Contracts	$25,000	2.79%
Tools	$88,000	9.83%
Training event attendance	$23,300	2.60%
Citizen engagement	$4,200	0.47%
Travel	$18,300	2.04%
Dissemination	$6,500	0.73%
Other	$0	0.00%
Total direct costs	$895,230	100.00%
Grand total with 20% overheads	**$1,074,276**	

SOLUTIONS CONTRIBUTION TO CAPABILITY MATURITY

Maturity in the context of the capability maturity assessment refers to the degree to which the solutions we propose will strengthen processes related to the capacity sharing vision. In report 2, each of the capabilities in the first column of Table 12 were assessed as developing—some processes defined, inconsistent application, limited management. In the second column, we provide a summary of the rationale for the CMA score, and in the final column, we explain how the solutions are expected to positively impact the maturity level of the various capabilities.

Table 12: Prioritized solutions' contribution to capability maturity

Capability (from stage 2 report)	Rationale for the CMA score (level 2, developing)	Solutions' expected contribution to capability maturity
Websites, portals or knowledge hubs that curate	Existing platforms for sharing resources, tools and knowledge for capacity	ESIC Knowledge Hub will provide full interoperability and seamless integration

Capability (from stage 2 report)	Rationale for the CMA score (level 2, developing)	Solutions' expected contribution to capability maturity
resources for evidence synthesis production and use	strengthening for evidence synthesis production and knowledge translation are operated by varied institutions with limited outreach in relation to varied sectors, countries, or regions.	across evidence synthesis platforms owned and operated by multiple institutions. Knowledge Translation AI will augment the Knowledge Hub with an AI-driven tool.
Multi-country, cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary partnerships (networks or communities) for capacity sharing	- There is limited systematic approach to cross-learning and sharing of best practices for evidence synthesis. - Weak incentives for transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral evidence synthesis collaborations, therefore Evidence is produced in silos across sectors and fields of study.	Regional collaborating centres with country nodes will support south-south, north-south collaboration; enable evidence synthesis training and development that integrates knowledge and experience from varied sectors and regions.
Training programs for evidence synthesis production, dissemination and use	- Uneven capacity to synthesizing different types of evidence (e.g., economic, qualitative, effectiveness, across jurisdictions. - Lack of incentives in some research system to engage in evidence synthesis production and knowledge translation.	Competency frameworks will enable standardized training. Continuous Professional Development modules will allow training institutions to include CPD modules, aligned with technological advancements in the synthesis field, in their programme offerings. Mentorship and Train the Trainer Programs will support hands on learning and expand skills across institutions, regions and sectors. Curriculum for UN and national training agencies will mainstream evidence synthesis in national training systems thereby ensuring legitimacy and sustainability. Regional collaborating centres with country nodes will support training Global Evidence Synthesis Innovation Fund can be used to support training
Funding for capacity-sharing initiatives in evidence synthesis	Insufficient funding for evidence generation and application	Global Evidence Synthesis Innovation Fund will provide long -term flexible funding for experimentation and innovation in evidence synthesis. The Funders Forum will fill a coordination gap to ensure evidence synthesis investments maximizes ESIC goals and societal impact.

ALIGNMENT WITH SHOW ME THE EVIDENCE

Table 13: Prioritized solutions recommended for inclusion in the menu of options for funder investment, aligned to the SHOW ME the evidence features.

	Support Systems locally (S)	Harmonized Efforts globally (H)	Open Science Approaches (O)	Waste Reduction efforts (W)	Measured Communications (M)	Equity and Efficiency (E)
ESIC Knowledge Hub	Strengthens infrastructure with automated ES tools	Provides an interoperable platform to access and share ES resources	Enhances transparency by knowledge sharing	Helps users avoid duplication by discovering existing evidence		Improves access to knowledge across regions and institutions
KTai	Strengthens infrastructure with automated ES tools	Real time harmonization of global efforts	Enhances transparency, if tools and outputs are open	Automates processes to reduce time and resource use	Allows stakeholders to engage with, and shape interpretation of evidence	Makes ES more accessible and develops actionable messages faster
Regional Collaborating Centers	Establishes localized support &/or structure for ES activities	- Incorporate global and regional approaches - Facilitates coordinated action and shared strategies across regions and sectors	Enhance sharing of new knowledge on ES methods and capacity sharing	Helps reduce redundancy through regional coordination	Can focus communication to citizens to build capacity to use evidence in daily life.	Develops South-led leadership and capacity
Mentorship and Train-the-Trainer Programs	Build technical capacity and support for local ES actors	- Make it easy to learn from experts in multiple regions - Build technical and leadership capacity locally	Training and CPD programs can mainstream open science practices by teaching FAIR/CARE principles.	Provide support to evidence support institutions		Build capacity in underrepresented regions. skills in underserved areas. Empowering diverse actors.

	Support Systems locally (S)	Harmonized Efforts globally (H)	Open Science Approaches (O)	Waste Reduction efforts (W)	Measured Communications (M)	Equity and Efficiency (E)
Continuous Professional Development Modules	Provide ongoing education for local actors	Create common standards and shared languages for evidence use				Improve workforce efficiency and career development opportunities in underserved areas
Competency Frameworks	Provide a standard approach to build local ES training systems	Provide standard approaches globally	Frameworks will be shared openly	Reduce waste in training and education		Improve equitable distribution of capacity
Curriculum for UN national evaluation capacity development (NECD)	- Builds capacity to embed ES in existing local training systems - Deepens local system integration	Potential to create cross-country learning		National agencies will use the same curriculum, thereby reducing duplication		- Improves equitable distribution of capacity - Mainstreams ES in underserved systems
Global Evidence Synthesis Innovation Fund (GESIF)	Supports local system innovation and development	Fund can include principles to leverage the work of others	Can be used to support development of open-source ES tools	Reduces duplication and focus on scalable approaches		Can increase participation in ES by underrepresented institutions and regions (especially from the global South and vulnerable settings)
Funders Forum	Supports local system innovation and development	Aligns donor strategies to reduce fragmentation and scale up good practices	Can mandate open science as a condition of participation in funding opportunities	Minimizes funding duplication		Promotes efficiency by pooling resources and aligning priorities

	Support Systems locally (S)	Harmonized Efforts globally (H)	Open Science Approaches (O)	Waste Reduction efforts (W)	Measured Communications (M)	Equity and Efficiency (E)
Capacity Sharing MEL System	Evaluates local ES and knowledge translation efforts	Identifies best practices	Findings from capacity sharing evaluations open and freely accessible	Allows identification and elimination of ineffective or redundant practices	Generates evidence on what capacity sharing approaches work best	Promotes learning -driven, equitable improvement across institutions